

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES  
NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL  
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DEC 12 1959  
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SPACE SCIENCE BOARD

December 7, 1959

Dr. Joshua Lederberg  
Department of Genetics  
School of Medicine  
Stanford University  
Palo Alto, California

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

I think that I have developed information on most of the points raised in your letter of November 23. The Westex material has been distributed to Board members, invited participants and other people that you requested as well as the appropriate committees of the Board. A distribution list is enclosed.

✓ We have discussed at some length the transmittal of the Westex material to Ierusalimskii. Odishaw strongly counsels against transmittal of the document for a number of reasons. First, despite a specific request by Odishaw to the U.S.S.R. for information on sterilization procedures used, we have not even received an acknowledgement of the communication. Only those generalities appearing in the public press have been available. Second, it does not seem appropriate for us to send the minutes of Westex meetings to the Soviet Union providing, as they do, the most advanced thinking of our senior scientists with regard to the many biological questions. Third, it seems wiser and more appropriate to send reprints of articles which have appeared, in addition to the material provided to Westex 1 by Horowitz. (I am enclosing for your use references of this type.) We suggest that these accompany a personal letter from you to Ierusalimskii, outlining the interests in exobiology of you, Calvin, and the Westex group generally and expressing the earnest hope that he and his colleagues participate in the COSPAR Symposium in Nice: a perfect opportunity for a productive scientific discussion.

With regard to your suggestion of a public statement of U. S. policy on space probe decontamination, I have discussed this with Homer Newell at NASA, pointing out your thoughts on the necessity for guidance prior to COSPAR. The Space Agency (according to Newell) plans no public statement. He advises that the letter from Glennan to Odishaw (Agenda Item 4.5 - Sixth Meeting Space Science Board) contains the NASA policy and its current program for sterilization. He feels that this should provide the

Dr. Joshua Lederberg

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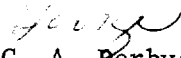
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basis for any discussions or informal remarks which you and Calvin might wish to make at COSPAR. (Newell will, of course, be in Nice and available to you for advice. He would also be happy to discuss this topic with you or Calvin either by letter or personally.)

Lastly, there is no information on Russian participation in the COSPAR Symposium other than an indication at the COSPAR Executive Committee Meeting, November 10-13, that the COSPAR Charter matters would be satisfactorily resolved because they hoped to participate in the Symposium. If we do receive definite word, I shall advise you. However, there is every indication that they will be represented.

Best regards.

Sincerely yours,

  
G. A. Derbyshire  
Space Science Board Secretariat

Enclosures

cc: H. Odishaw  
R. C. Peavey